

Connex

Units 16 and 17a, Headlands Trading Estate, Swindon, Wiltshire
SN2 7JQ

Inspection date

28 May 2025

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards when it opens. It is currently operating without registration

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 2(1) to 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d) to 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(h) to 2A(1), 2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(d) to 2A(2), 3 to 4.

- The proposed school intends to provide education for pupils with autism and social, emotional, mental health (SEMH) issues. Pupils are likely to arrive at the school at any time during their primary or secondary education. Secondary age pupils will either have been permanently excluded or at risk of permanent exclusion from their mainstream schools. Primary age pupils will have struggled with anxiety at their mainstream schools. The focus for primary age pupils is to support their communication and interaction skills. It is anticipated that many pupils will have missed large parts of their education. The curriculum is intended to re-connect pupils with learning and enable them to transition back into mainstream education.
- All pupils will have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) with some in receipt of education, health and care (EHC) plans. The school proposes that staff work alongside other professionals to provide pupils with the education and therapy that they require. The therapeutic interventions, including, therapeutic stories and occupational therapy, will be important features in the school's work.
- A clearly written curriculum policy outlines the subjects offered to pupils at both primary and secondary. The school's curriculum is carefully constructed to ensure that the gaps in pupils' knowledge can be addressed. At the secondary phase of the school, pupils will study for accredited awards such as Functional Skills.
- The school has reviewed the ways in which the curriculum can best meet the learning needs and interests of pupils with SEND. Information about each pupil will inform their 'personalised support plan'. This will enable staff to make bespoke adaptations to the curriculum so that pupils can learn with confidence and success. Support staff will also be employed.
- The school has designed an effective personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC)

development. The curriculum makes clear how pupils will learn about the importance of freedom of speech and the rule of law. The relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum has been similarly well planned. The policy informs parents and carers about their right to withdraw their children if they so wish.

- The school has established clear assessment arrangements to check what pupils know and do not know when they start at the school. This information will be used to inform the curriculum offer for each pupil. Leaders have established assessment points throughout the curriculum to ensure that pupils have secure knowledge before moving on to more complex learning.
- The school has designed monitoring procedures so that they can check how well pupils are learning. Leaders will also monitor the ways in which pupils' EHC plan targets are addressed.
- Parents will receive assessment information through reports and parent consultation events.
- The school has planned to prioritise the careers programme, particularly in the secondary phase. The school has appointed an independent and impartial careers adviser to support the delivery of the careers programme. As part of the curriculum, pupils will receive support with planning their next steps in further education, apprenticeships and work. They will also have opportunities for work experience placements.
- The school has already recruited staff for the proposed school. Staff have already completed a breadth of training focused on the curriculum, welfare and safeguarding. They plan for all support staff to be trained in therapeutic interventions so that they can offer both academic and therapeutic support.
- The independent school standards (the standards) in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school is granted permission to open.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Paragraph 5 to 5(d)(iii)

- The school will promote pupils' SMSC development through the curriculum and a breadth of extra-curricular activities. The PSHE curriculum encompasses a clear focus on British values, such as democracy and mutual respect. The school plans to study and engage with a range of cultural and religious celebrations such as Diwali and Chinese New Year.
- Threaded through the curriculum is a clear focus on equality and respect for those with protected characteristics. The school intends to support pupils to discuss their understanding about the topics they will study in PSHE. Leaders' intention is that pupils develop the knowledge and understanding to become effective citizens of modern Britain.
- The school intends for staff to develop positive, trusting relationships with pupils to model and support the ways in which they respond emotionally to the world around them.

- Through its monitoring processes, safeguarding training and collegiate working, leaders have established their high expectations of staff. These ensure that pupils are not influenced by partisan religious or political viewpoints.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school is granted permission to open.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7 to 7(b), 9 to 16(b)

- The school's arrangements to safeguard pupils are appropriate and well-considered. Leaders are alert to the contextual safeguarding risks that pupils could potentially face. They reflect leaders' strong understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. There are meticulously designed checks in place to ensure that nothing is missed.
- The school's policies and procedures to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils are fit for purpose and available on request for parents.
- The safeguarding policy follows statutory guidance. All staff receive annual safeguarding training as well as regular updates. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy designated safeguarding leads (DDSL) receive enhanced safeguarding training so that they can have forensic oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements.
- The behaviour policy is both detailed and pertinent to the SEND needs of pupils to be admitted to the school. The policy demonstrates the restorative and relational approach to managing the behaviour of pupils. The anti-bullying policy is also appropriate.
- The school's health and safety policy complies with the relevant legislation. The proposed school is on two adjacent sites for the primary phase and secondary phase. On each site, the school's buildings and premises are clean and well maintained. Routine checks are conducted to ensure that the buildings meet the statutory health and safety requirements.
- The first aid policy is fit for purpose. Leaders have ensured that all staff are suitably trained in first aid. First aid resources are easily accessible in the medical room.
- The school's policies and written guidance are fit for purpose. They are available on request to parents and carers. They are suitably detailed ensuring that pupils and staff are safe and well supported.
- The school has ensured that the admissions register includes relevant detail about pupils. This document informs the therapeutic interventions and support plan required by individual pupils. Risk assessments are detailed and clearly define hazards alongside ways in which they can be mitigated.
- The proprietor has ensured that the premises are compliant with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The school has ensured that detailed external reviews and audits of the fire safety arrangements are carried out annually. The fire evacuation plan for each site is suitable. Fire doors, fire blankets, fire extinguishers and fire detection equipment have been externally certified. Leaders have also planned fire drills as well as appropriate fire assembly points.

- The proprietor has planned a high pupil-to-staff ratio. This is to ensure that pupils are suitably supervised at all times in the school and during off-site activities.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school is granted permission to open.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- *Paragraphs 18(2) to 18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2) to 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 20(6) to 20(6)(c) 21(1) to 21(3)(b), 21(5) to 21 (5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(c) 21*
- The single central record (SCR) has all of the required checks on staff connected to the proposed school. Appropriate recruitment checks have been carried out for all staff, the proprietor and members of the governing body prior to the commencement of their roles.
- The proprietor and headteacher routinely check the SCR to ensure that it is accurate and fit for purpose.
- The school is likely to meet this part of the independent school standards if the school is permitted to open.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- *Paragraphs 23(1) to 23(1)(c), 24(1) to 24(1)(b), 24(2), 25 to 29(1)(b)*
- The proposed school will operate on two adjacent sites. One site will be for the primary phase and the other site will cater for secondary phase pupils. The school is already operating on both sites as an unregistered alternative provision for secondary phase pupils who have either been permanently excluded or are at risk of exclusion and primary phase pupils with heightened anxiety.
- The accommodation at both sites is fit for purpose. It is suitable for the age range and pupil numbers intended. Across both sites, there are spacious, well-furnished classrooms, break out rooms and sensory rooms as well as therapy rooms and offices.
- There are suitable toilets for pupils and staff. There is suitable access to water for drinking and washing. The temperature of the water is regulated and checked regularly.
- The medical room is well resourced. It has a bed, first aid provisions and a lockable medicine cabinet alongside a nearby toilet.
- Both sites have access to outdoor space. The school has access to a range of transport to take pupils to the leisure centre for physical education (PE) as well as other places to enhance the curriculum.
- The lighting, heating and acoustics are fit for purpose on each site. There is sufficient external lighting to ensure the safety of pupils and staff.
- The school is likely to meet this part of the independent school standards if the school is permitted to open.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraphs 32(1) to 32(1)(g), 32(1)(j) to 32(2)(b)(i), 32(2)(dc) to 32(3)(d), 32(3)(f) to 32(4)(c)

- The proposed school's website provides parents and other stakeholders with a breadth of information about the school. All required documentation and policies required under part 6 of the independent school standards were also provided by leaders, either electronically or during the on-site visit.
- The school has rigorous tracking processes in place to monitor the progress of pupils with EHC plans.
- Leaders understand the requirement to publish any future inspection reports to parents. Parents will be able to request paper copies of policies and documents if needed.
- The school is likely to meet this part of the independent school standards if the school is permitted to open.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33 to 33(k)

- The proposed school has a detailed complaints policy informed by guidance from the Department for Education (DfE). The policy explains the steps and timeline for complaints to be made including where there is a complaint about the proprietor.
- The school is likely to meet this part of the independent school standards if the school is permitted to open.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1) to 34(1)(c)

- The proprietor, Brunel Education, has a background in the strategic management of SEND schools both in collaboration with Brunel Academy Trust and in its current role as a charitable body that oversees other SEND settings. Leaders demonstrate secure knowledge and understanding of the independent school standards.
- School leaders, including the proprietor, are very knowledgeable about SEND education. They have worked extensively in SEND education. The moral drive for the school is clear: enabling and supporting primary and secondary age pupils who have missed large parts of their education and have struggled to engage with education.
- The proprietor has appointed a governing body to hold school leaders to account and provide support where required.
- The proprietor ensures that school leaders know the independent school standards well. Leaders conduct routine checks on compliance. The proprietor uses external specialists to provide assurance that standards are being met.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the school is granted permission to open.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school's equality policy is fit for purpose.

Statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage

- The school has a detailed understanding of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory requirements. They intend to provide a curriculum that covers all aspects of the EYFS. Children's progress will be checked and shared with parents routinely.
- The proposed school is likely to comply with the learning, development and welfare requirements of the EYFS.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school is likely to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Proposed school details

Unique reference number	151862
DfE registration number	866/6007
Inspection number	10404241

This inspection was carried out under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards that are required for registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School status	Independent special school
Proprietor	Brunel Education
Chair	Christopher Sims
Headteacher	Mark Wiseman
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37,045 to £206,000
Telephone number	01793 493 905
Website	www.connexap.org
Email address	pdavis@brunel.org.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

Provider already operating

Number of pupils of compulsory school age	40
Number of pupils of compulsory school age who have an education, health and care plan, or who are looked after by a local authority	29
Total hours operating as a school per week	32.5
Total hours of teaching provided per week	32.5

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	4-16	4-16	4-16
Number of pupils on the school roll	40	44	44

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	21	44
Number of part-time pupils	19	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	40	44
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	29	30
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	29	30

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	11	11
Number of part-time teaching staff	29	29
Number of staff in the welfare provision	23	23

Information about this proposed school

- The school is located in central Swindon. It intends to cater for 22 primary and 22 secondary pupils up to the age of 16. All pupils will have SEND needs such as autism and SEMH. Some pupils will have an EHC plan.
- Most pupils are likely to have missed parts of their education and have significant anxiety about going to school.
- Places will be commissioned by Swindon local authority.
- The proposed school will not have any religious character.
- The school does not intend to use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the DfE in response to the proprietor's application to open an independent school. This was the school's first pre-registration inspection.
- The purpose of this inspection was to check whether the proposed school is likely to meet the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Schools must comply with the standards to be registered.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The inspector also met with the chief executive officer (CEO) of Brunel Education and the proprietorial representative. The inspector took a tour of the site with senior staff. She reviewed documents provided by the school and those that will be available on the school's website. The inspector checked the single central record of pre-appointment checks.

Inspection team

Susan Aykin, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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